6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe El



held this poor, often stricken community in thrall was different from that which the Christian peasant nursed at his fireside, with his children and his beasts about him, the words with which it was conjured up were very often the same for both. Love the Lord, thy God; love thy neighbor as thou dost thyself —the affection so hard to find in the daily street, but longed for even more earnestly, desperately than a dear woman is desired, seemed for the moment to have been ushered in over the sagging thresholds. . . . And then, of course, the Sabbath would end and the bitterness would return, and Leah would stand in the street to see the Gentile curse her children. Yet even so there was a bond between the spurner and the spurned. They knew in their hearts that they were all God's children, dirty and dissolute children, but they were certain they had a place to go home to, come the eve of the Lord's Day.

346 In any event, the general character of the Church and its 794 activities in Central and Eastern Europe was formed historically by the dramatic tension between mass tendencies and leadership. In Austria-Hungary religious institutions grew rich and powerful, sometimes paying for their prosperity with a measure of undue dependence on the Habsburg state. Even now, in a drab time, the traveler through Austria will look with admiration on the great monasteries—St. Peter in Salzburg, Melk on the Danube, St. Florian, Klosterneuburg on a hill above Vienna, and many others—which outdo in splendor manorial castles and are surrounded by rich lands. These were centers of humanistic education, and numerous merited tributes have been paid to them. And in many another place, urban or rural, the Church owned important properties amassed through the generosity of the faithful or received through royal donation. In every part of the Empire, church bells rang rich and deep, even when the piety to which they appealed was woefully superficial.

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe El



But in the end these possessions stirred the envy not merely 794 ●
of ambitious and worldly men but also of the land-hungry 471
poor. To be sure the Abbot of a flourishing monastery might 578
correctly point out that the revenues did not enrich the monks,
who normally lived under his guidance by an austere religious
rule. These religious in their bare cells did not taste the fine
vintages pressed from monastery grapes carefully tended by
brothers who rose at four for Matins and then expended them-
selves zealously for the cause of God. Nevertheless the critics
were not by any means only emancipated spirits who found
moral discipline irksome and the Church old-fashioned. They
were also earnest, weather-beaten peasants, with no soil to till,
and often desperately poor, who understandably looked upon
Church estates with a covetous eye. And of course everywhere
the well applauded and sharp-tongued ideologies of the time—
Marxism, Nationalism, Nihilism—were allied against the
Church, often looked upon by the seemingly more enlightened
folk of those days as the heritor of a creed outworn. And it must
be admitted that sometimes a segment of the clergy, grown
comfortable and worldly, acted as if they thought so, too.

Protestantism inside the old Empire clung to the enclaves 795
which had been established during the era of the Reformation
and the Counter-Reformation. Despite the strife incident to the [162]
Thirty Years' War both Lutheranism and Calvinism main-
tained themselves resolutely in Hungary, for example, so that
prior to the outbreak of World War II Catholics in that country
constituted about 67 per cent of the population, while Protes-
tants numbered nearly 27 per cent and adhered to both the
Lutheran and the Calvinist tradition. In Czechoslovakia the
situation was relatively the same, though the number of Protes-
tant groups was greater. A considerable part of the population
—6 per cent in 1932—professed no religion of any kind. An-
other characteristic of the old Empire was the presence of the

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe El



tion of separate states. Therewith a tide of Liberalism merged with the currents of upsurging tribal nationalism to create the pattern of conflict which was later to prove so advantageous to the totalitarians. Czech nationalism, having in Thomas Masaryk a brilliantly effective standard-bearer, seemed at first blush to usher in a new era of democratic and progressive social thought. It soon became obvious, however, that the autonomism of the Czechs—which led at the outset even to the establishment of a National Church—would of necessity engender comparable feelings in the breasts of the other peoples in the Czechoslovak Republic. The Slovaks rallied round their own traditions of language and culture, and swiftly but surely became committed to a quest for autonomy which found a temporary though unsatisfactory haven under Hitler. Among Sudeten Germans feeling was almost as strong and led ultimately to the fateful formation of a political party which advocated union with Germany. Nor was the situation different elsewhere. Yugoslavia was plagued from the beginning by deep and bitter conflict among the Serbs, the Croats, and the Slovenes.

In Hungary a violent Communist revolution, spearheaded in late 1918 by Béla Kun, ruled for a time by bloodshed. But ere long this uprising, which had very little popular support, was put down; reaction set in, and a dictatorial government was established after it had compiled its own catalogue of excesses. Here was made manifest, probably for the first time, how significant the stability of religious groups could prove to be. Not only did they temper noticeably the excesses of extremists, but under the leadership of great churchmen they began to build organizations dedicated to social improvement. It is also true that bitter experience under the Béla Kun regime made Hungary one of the most anti-Communist countries of Europe.

And so, as the turbulence engendered by the war apparently subsided, it seemed probable that a period of relative security

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe El



In attempting to visualize the complex continuous effort by the Church in these lands to educate the people and to meet their physical and spiritual needs we deal not with an island in the stream of modern life—as we should if, for example, we set out to evaluate the influence of religion on the art, music, and architecture of present-day America—but verily with that stream itself. For example, the press that appeared under Catholic auspices in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia was a mighty force, in all its ramifications from the daily newspaper to the monthly periodical, for the shaping of public opinion. On the other hand, hospitals and refuges, schools and day nurseries, conducted for the most part under the supervision of religious orders, were almost the only institutions of such character to be found in some countries. Therefore the Communist onslaught upon this manifold activity was not merely against tradition but verily against action. It could not have succeeded unless its directors were safely established behind a dense array of Russian machine guns. It was an invasion resembling in some respects the earlier inroads from the East under which all these lands had suffered not once but many times. Assuredly the men in the Vatican, pondering the news each day, must often have let their thought return to times when Turk and Tartar bombarded the ancient citadels of once Christian Europe.

We shall now summarize, though of necessity far too briefly, Protestant efforts to establish ecumenical union with the Russian Orthodox Church. On the one hand they resulted to some extent from the failure during the Pontificate of Pope Leo XIII to prepare the way for the union of the Anglican Church with Rome. This failure, it will be recalled, was in large measure due to Rome's decision that Anglican Orders were not valid. On the other hand, Protestant Churches in Eastern Europe often felt that the attitude of Russian Orthodoxy toward the State was more compatible with the traditional views of